

SUBCOMMITTEE ON OVERSIGHT OF GOVERNMENT MANAGEMENT, THE FEDERAL WORKFORCE, AND THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA

Ms. LANDRIEU. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs' Subcommittee on Oversight of Government Management, the Federal Workforce, and the District of Columbia be authorized to meet during the session of the Senate on Tuesday, May 19, 2009, at 2:30 p.m., to conduct a hearing entitled, "Public Health Challenges in Our Nation's Capital."

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

SELECT COMMITTEE ON INTELLIGENCE

Ms. LANDRIEU. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Select Committee on Intelligence be authorized to meet during the session of the Senate on Tuesday, May 19, 2009, at 2:30 p.m.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

PRIVILEGES OF THE FLOOR

Mr. COCHRAN, Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that Lauren Frese and Tom Osterhoudt, who are detailees assigned to the Committee on Appropriations, be granted floor privileges during consideration of the fiscal year 2009 supplemental appropriations bill.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without Objection, it is so ordered.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

EXECUTIVE CALENDAR

Mr. REID. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate proceed to executive session to consider Calendar Nos. 94, 95, 98, and 152; that the nominations be confirmed en bloc, the motions to reconsider be laid upon the table, no further motions be in order and that any statements be printed in the RECORD; that the President be immediately notified of the Senate's action and the Senate resume legislative session.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

The nominations considered and confirmed en bloc are as follows:

DEPARTMENT OF ENERGY

Kristina M. Johnson, of Maryland, to be Under Secretary of Energy.

Steven Elliot Koonin, of California, to be Under Secretary for Science, Department of Energy.

Scott Blake Harris, of Virginia, to be General Counsel of the Department of Energy.

DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR

Larry J. Echo Hawk, of Utah, to be Assistant Secretary of the Interior.

Mr. REID. Are we now in a period of morning business?

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The majority leader is correct.

RONALD REAGAN CENTENNIAL COMMISSION ACT

Mr. REID. I ask unanimous consent that the Senate proceed to H.R. 131.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will report the bill by title.

The assistant legislative clerk read as follows:

A bill (H.R. 131) to establish the Ronald Reagan Centennial Commission.

There being no objection, the Senate proceeded to consider the bill.

Mr. REID. I ask unanimous consent the bill be read a third time, passed, the motion to reconsider be laid on the table, and that any statements relating to this matter be printed in the RECORD.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

The bill (H.R. 131) was ordered to be read a third time, was read the third time, and passed.

EXPRESSING THE IMPORTANCE OF PUBLIC DIPLOMACY

Mr. REID. I ask unanimous consent that we now proceed to Calendar No. 56, S. Res. 49.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will report the resolution by title.

The assistant legislative clerk read as follows:

A resolution (S. Res. 49) to express the sense of the Senate regarding the importance of public diplomacy.

There being no objection, the Senate proceeded to consider the resolution.

Mr. REID. I ask unanimous consent that the resolution be agreed to, the preamble be agreed to, the motion to reconsider be laid on the table, and that any statements relating to this resolution be printed in the RECORD.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

The resolution (S. Res. 49) was agreed to.

The preamble was agreed to.

The resolution, with its preamble, reads as follows:

S. RES. 49

Whereas public diplomacy is the conduct of foreign relations directly with the average citizen of a country, rather than with officials of a country's foreign ministry;

Whereas public diplomacy is commonly conducted through people-to-people exchanges in which experts, authors, artists, educators, and students interact with their peers in other countries;

Whereas effective public diplomacy promotes free and unfiltered access to information about the United States through books, newspapers, periodicals, and the Internet;

Whereas public diplomacy requires a willingness to discuss all aspects of society, search for common values, foster a long-term bilateral relationship based on mutual respect, and recognize that certain areas of disagreement may remain unresolved on a short term basis;

Whereas a BBC World Service poll published in February 2009 that involved 13,000 respondents in 21 countries found that while 40 percent of the respondents had a positive view of the United States, 43 percent had a negative view of the United States;

Whereas Freedom House's 2008 Global Press Freedom report notes that 123 countries (66 percent of the world's countries and 80 percent of the world's population) have a

press that is classified as "Not Free" or "Partly Free";

Whereas the Government of the United Kingdom, of France, and of Germany run stand-alone public diplomacy facilities throughout the world, which are known as the British Council, the Alliance Francaise, and the Goethe Institute, respectively;

Whereas these government-run facilities teach the national languages of their respective countries, offer libraries, newspapers, and periodicals, sponsor public lecture and film series that engage local audiences in dialogues that foster better understandings between these countries and create an environment promoting greater trust and openness;

Whereas the United States has historically operated similar facilities, known as American Centers, which—

(1) offered classes in English, extensive libraries housing collections of American literature, history, economics, business, and social studies, and reading rooms offering the latest American newspapers, periodicals, and academic journals;

(2) hosted visiting American speakers and scholars on these topics; and

(3) ran United States film series on topics related to American values;

Whereas in societies in which freedom of speech, freedom of the press, or local investment in education were minimal, American Centers provided vital outposts of information for citizens throughout the world, giving many of them their only exposure to uncensored information about the United States;

Whereas this need for uncensored information about the United States has accelerated as more foreign governments have restricted Internet access or blocked Web sites viewed as hostile to their political regimes;

Whereas following the end of the Cold War and the attacks on United States embassies in Kenya and Tanzania, budgetary and security pressures resulted in the drastic downsizing or closure of most of the American Centers;

Whereas beginning in 1999, American Centers began to be renamed Information Resource Centers and relocated primarily inside United States embassy compounds;

Whereas of the 177 Information Resource Centers operating in February 2009, 87, or 49 percent, operate on a "By Appointment Only" basis and 18, or 11 percent, do not permit any public access;

Whereas Information Resource Centers located outside United States embassy compounds receive significantly more visitors than those inside such compounds, including twice the number of visitors in Africa, 6 times more visitors in the Middle East, and 22 times more visitors in Asia; and

Whereas Iran has increased the number of similar Iranian facilities, known as Iranian Cultural Centers, to about 60 throughout the world: Now, therefore, be it

Resolved, That—

(1) the Secretary of State should initiate a reexamination of the public diplomacy platform strategy of the United States with a goal of reestablishing publicly accessible American Centers;

(2) after taking into account relevant security considerations, the Secretary of State should consider placing United States public diplomacy facilities at locations conducive to maximizing their use, consistent with the authority given to the Secretary under section 606(a)(2)(B) of the Secure Embassy Construction and Counterterrorism Act of 1999 (22 U.S.C. 4865(a)(2)(B)) to waive certain requirements of that Act.